

As a career fire chief and emergency vehicle driving instructor, I am closely monitoring SB 1084 as it would correct an outdated and likely unintentionally restrictive portion of the Motor Vehicle Code relating to emergency warning lights. Years ago, the requirement for warning lights to be mounted to the roof portion of the vehicle was only applicable to privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer or paid firefighters and EMS workers. Flashing, rotating, and oscillating lights used at the time were large and it was difficult for interior lights to be seen at all angles and from adequate distances.

With the revision of the code to include green lights for governmental snow plows earlier this year, the order of the language was inadvertently changed making the roof provision applicable to all authorized emergency vehicles with the exception of police vehicles where deemed undesirable. In this new context, hundreds of existing authorized emergency vehicles became non-complaint. Many fire chief and EMS supervisor vehicles are equipped with ultra-high intensity LED systems in which the lights are mounted inside the cab and around the perimeter of the vehicle. These systems are extremely effective, and can be seen at all angles literally for miles. The advantage is that the systems are almost unnoticeable when not activated, making them ideal for supervisory and administrative vehicles. At this point, these systems should be replaced or augmented with \$1000+ rooftop lightbars to remain legal. The concern is not so much enforcement action, but rather liability exposure to the communities in the event of an accident while using emergency vehicle privilege.

With the advent of LED technology, there is no longer any reason to restrict privately owned authorized emergency vehicles either, thereby allowing volunteers to retain an unobtrusive civilian look when not actually responding to an emergency. With serious recruiting and retention issues in modern volunteer fire and EMS, any opportunity to avoid unnecessary regulation of such volunteers is advisable.

Marked emergency vehicles often opt for low-profile (non-roof-mounted) lighting systems as well. As an example, very few modern ambulances have roof mounted lights. All of the lighting is mounted on the upper sides of the vehicle below the roofline. The use of lightbars on ambulances has been unusual for many years. In fact, Federal GSA standard KKK-A-1822F regulates all aspects of ambulance design and requires that lighting be mounted on the upper sides of the vehicle body.

It should be noted that the other statutory requirements of visibility over an arc of 360 degrees from a distance of at least 500 feet and the use of an audible warning device when utilizing emergency vehicle privilege would remain in effect. In my professional opinion, I can see many advantages to this legislation and virtually no downside. Safety will not be compromised by the deletion of the rooftop mounting provision.

I apologize for my inability to testify in person, but sincerely appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective with the committee. I would be happy to help in any way that I can.

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